1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

the northern, eastern, southern and central. After the anointings 342
the pillars are stamped with a large cone made out of ground rice, called *Gett'r tho-mu*. Finally all present throw rice mixed with flour at the pillars, shouting in as loud a voice as possible *Ta-shi shu*. [751]
This ceremony is meant to avert illness from the inhabitants of the house.

Tashi chéné is occasionally performed after major repairs. Thus 356 ●
while we were there Katel had the ceremony performed after a new floor had been put into his house (but he had omitted to have the ceremony done when the house was first built); and Jiroong, whose house had been gutted by fire, intended to perform the ceremony when he should have completed his repairs.

Minor repairs and alterations can be performed at any convenient time, and without any ceremony. The most frequent of such repairs is re-thatching, which needs doing at least once every seven years. The reeds used for thatching are collected about three months beforehand, bent while still green, and left to dry. The necessary bamboo supports are also collected and cut to the required length and creepers whose bark will be used for fastening the bamboos are fetched from the forest. (It is technically an 356
offence to take these creepers without paying for them; and when 673
Pembu's roof was being re-thatched the old man who was stripping the creepers sat isolated from the other workers so that they should not be cognisant of the crime being committed. The gesture was entirely symbolical, for the old man had chosen as a hiding place a piece of ground on the side of the main path leading to the house, so that he was the first thing seen by most people arriving to work.) When all the material has been collected the house-owner decides on a day for the re-thatching and informs all his friends and neighbours.

First of all the thatch and rotten bamboo are stripped off three 356
sides of the house and burnt; the thatch on the east side is left till the rest is completed to serve as a shelter in case of rain. Then the bamboo cross-pieces are lashed into position and the reeds slung across them; the distance of the cross-pieces is so calculated that there is a triple layer of thatch. Finally the thatch may be kept in place by bamboos fastened above it, but this is not done in all houses.

For such a piece of work as this helpers arrive all through the day and set about doing whatever job they consider necessary at the moment, without consultation or instruction, and often without

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much relation to what the other workers are doing. Men, women and children all work together, and the task proceeds in a rather haphazard fashion, to the accompaniment of a constant fire of jokes, most of them obscene. When the work is finished all those who have helped are given a feast.

Attached to some households and fields is an ambivalent supernatural called *Thyak-dum* (white head). If this supernatural is good-tempered and contented he will bring health and prosperity to the home, and possibly, though people are not so sure about this, punish marauders in the family's fields; if he is angry he will bring disease and loss to the people who neglect him. Consequently when people live in a new house they must find out if *Thyak-dum* lives there, and if so, if they can control him. His whereabouts are discovered by a Mun going into meditation and seeing his presence mystically. If the house-owners can control *Thyak-dum* they will burn butter and incense leaves on some embers, and then sprinkle these embers with water and tell the supernatural to go away. If this fails they will make the *lafét* sacrifice (this sacrifice recurs constantly in the ceremonies of the Mun). On a wicker winnowing tray are placed banana leaves, and on top of them three rows of ground corn, and pieces of ginger, wild bird and dried fish; this offering is dicated by a Mun who also offers *chi* in a cup ceremonially buttered; after which the sacrifice is taken to the top of some high place and left there, uneaten.

In some houses however it is divined that though *Thyak-dum* is present the house-owner cannot control him. In such cases a little house has to be built for him, standing in the fields near the house. This 'devil's house' consists of a miniature Lepcha house about two feet wide, thatched and made of bamboo, raised about four feet off the ground on four bamboos. Nobody except the sacrificer (preferably a Mun, but any man who knows how and is not a lama will do) must touch, or even go too near this 'devil's house'; were anyone to do so they would become seriously ill. Twice a year, when the barley and when the rice is ripe, sacrifices must be placed inside this devil's house; the sacrifice consists of the fresh grain, together with meat, fish and silver money. When the new sacrifice is made the old one is removed and thrown away; the money however can be taken back into use. Besides these sacrifices a special pig must be kept penned for *Thyak-dum*; this pig is always called the pig of *Thyak-dum*. When it gets old it must be replaced by a young piglet; the old one is killed, and its cooked

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and it is worth noting that their houses contain no such ventilation. They are, moreover, in the habit of stopping up every crevice and crack with rags or paper, and in addition sleep with their heads completely covered, neither of which does the Lepcha do. The Lepcha house, moreover, has a wooden floor, through the joints of which, since the house is raised off the ground, air can also enter. The Nepali house, on the contrary, is built flush with the ground and has a floor of rammed earth smeared over with a mixture of mud and cow-dung; this last for ceremonial cleanliness.

24th March:

We went this morning to watch a house being re-roofed. It belonged to Pemba, Pichi's Lama brother. When we arrived at about nine o'clock some twenty men, including a number of Lamas, were already putting on new rafters. Only two women were present: Pemba's wife and mother; but others will turn up later, to help in the actual thatching. No payment is made to the helpers; but in addition to being fed while they are working they are given a feast on the conclusion of the work.

Women started to arrive about ten o'clock, and at once started to light fires and prepare the gargantuan meal which seems to be the usual complement of such occasions. Everyone appeared to be completely sober (an unusual state of affairs); but as soon as the women arrived sex was, as usual, the chief topic of conversation. Whenever a woman came anywhere near she would invariably be greeted with some obscene remark, at which all the others would laugh. The greatest joke seemed to be to induce the girls to go up on to the roof, so that men working below could pass personal remarks on such parts of their anatomy as were visible. I must say, however, that the girls seemed ready to play. At one time Pemba's mother, a most efficient and able woman, told the workers to press the thatch well down. "You come up here and we'll press things down all right," somebody shouted. This remark, to which she took not the slightest exception,

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521 522 831 was greeted with much giggling laughter, which seems to be reserved exclusively for this type of joke.

356 I was told that there was no one in charge of the work, and certainly did not hear anyone giving any sort of order. In spite of this, however, there was no fuss or bother; everyone seemed to know exactly what to do.

314 356 655 The material for roofing this house had been gradually collected during the past three months. We noticed one old man sitting apart, about a hundred yards away up the hill. He was preparing the canes for making the ties. We wondered why he was all alone. "So as not to attract the notice of any government official who might pass this way," he said. This appeared a most unlikely contingency, unless he thought we were spies; but since cane is a forest product, and therefore the property of the State, it should not rightfully be used without permission. This prohibition also applies of [313] course to firewood; but in that case appears to be disregarded.

342 313 The thatch, by means of two overlaps, is of three thicknesses. It is not fixed to the rafters but is roughly kept in place with a long stick tied right across it. It is made from a special kind of bamboo only found high up in the forest. This is cut into four-feet lengths, split, soaked in water, and bent double while still green. It is placed on the roof with the inner surface outside, so that the rain is carried off the roof by what is, to all intents and purposes, a series of open bamboo drains.

356 As soon as the rafters and cross-pieces had been prepared the women joined in the work, the heavy bundles of thatch being first carried up to the attic by men. Pemba's father took no part and spent most of his time repairing a hedge round the house, in which he was assisted by his youngest son. The whole roof had been stripped off before we arrived; but one small corner had been left, as protection in case the new roof was not completed by nightfall.

778 I noticed that a bullock's horn had been fastened over the door. This is known as *Gusung*, and is meant to frighten devils. There is no ceremony in connection with its use; but

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Typical Lepcha homestead.

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Sowing dry rice.

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Re-thatching a house.

[facing p. 172]

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it is usual to call in some experienced old man to fasten such things up. None of the things had been removed from the house while the roof was being repaired. It is said that a new roof lasts for about seven years, after which it must be completely renewed. No nails are used in the construction of houses, all woodwork being mortised and tied where necessary with canes. Even large buildings like the monastery are constructed entirely without nails.

* * * * *

There is no furniture in Lepcha houses; beds, tables (except the low Tibetan variety), and chairs being unknown. The kitchen stove is merely a platform of earth, on which some half-dozen large stones are placed as supports for the cooking pots. These are generally of copper or brass, and I never once saw any kind of earthenware vessel and was told they were never used. Stores of maize and millet hang from the rafters, and other grains are kept in baskets stacked against the walls. The family bedding may generally be seen draped across these baskets during the day-time; and unwanted clothing is suspended from bamboo slivers inserted in cracks in the walls. I occasionally noticed that the walls had been papered with old newspapers. One such was plastered with years-old copies of the *Evening News*, one of which advertised the film of "Bengal Lancer"; but how these ever reached Lingtem is beyond my comprehension. Our own cast-off papers were always in much demand, one man in particular asking constantly for pictures of wars. He seemed to think that war was a fine experience, and talked of little else, although of course he had never seen one. Anyhow, the walls of his cottage are no longer bare: and for the rest of his life he can sit in peace while gazing at pictures of Franco's atrocities. I hope sincerely that this is the nearest to war he will get.

Water is brought in long hollow bamboos and stored in copper pots, of the type that form part of the marriage gifts. These do not hold more than a couple of gallons, and are

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House-building and general repairs are also carried out at these times. Cardamoms are perennial and are planted in March and April, being grown from cuttings. The plants bear in the third year, and are at their best in the fourth, fifth, and sixth years, after which they are rooted up. If raised from seed the plants take from seven to eight years to mature. The fields have to be constantly weeded, especially at flowering time, since the flowers are close to the ground. When the cardamoms are gathered the flowered stem is removed, but the leaves are left intact.

I do not know when cardamoms were introduced into Sikkim, but Hooker, a most observant traveller, and a botanist moreover, makes no mention of them. Their cultivation, however, is now of great economic importance all over the State; but this aspect of the subject will be dealt with later.

It is believed in Jongu that cardamoms were introduced from Nepal, although I understand that the plant is not cultivated in that country; and certainly I have never seen it in such parts of Eastern Nepal as I have visited.

Menstruating women may not go near the cardamom plants, especially when they are in flower; nor should anyone who has used strong-smelling soap approach them, for this is offensive to the flowers. For the same reason the cardamom fields should never be used as latrines. It may be noted that all over Nepal menstruation is intimately connected with certain kinds of cultivation. A woman in this state may not, for instance, approach pumpkins, chillies, cucumbers, or egg-plants, or they will rot away: if they have only reached the flowering stage they will not set. It is thought that the smell of menstrual blood causes the damage, and that no harm will ensue if the woman thoroughly washes her body before going near the plants. Apart from this no one should point a finger at ripening pumpkins or cucumbers: nor should one talk loudly in their presence, or they will certainly rot away.

All these ideas are known to the people of Lingtem, and may possibly have been introduced by Tempa, who lived

½ [i.e., during Oct., Nov. and Dec.--Analyst]

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of the fontanel, and remains on the baby's head until it wears away. At the same time snail-shells, as already described, are tied round its neck and wrists and sometimes fastened to its clothing.

There is also a ceremony on the third day after birth, which is called *Pa-Gong Chi-tong*, the latter part of which word means merely *chi*-drinking—an indispensable part of all Lepcha ceremonies.

Very early in the morning, before any of the guests arrive, the floor is swept with wormwood and a little incense is burned. At the same time a Mun will come and wave offerings over the mother, should she have required his (or her) services on account of a difficult delivery; but if the birth was normal this office is omitted. The Mun takes a previously boiled chicken, divides it, and sets it on a tray, together with parched rice, ginger, and some pieces of wild birds' flesh. There is also the usual buttered cup for libations of *chi*, and the whole is offered to the god of birth. In the meantime most of the guests will have arrived, and the offering is now divided amongst them.

If the child is a boy, and particularly in the case of a first-born, an ox, pig, or goat will be sacrificed. In the case of a girl an animal is not generally slaughtered; but if the family is well-off it is usual to buy some meat and give each of the guests a piece, for true Lepcha hospitality demands that no guest should leave without a present of some sort. Whenever we went to a Lepcha house we were invariably given something to take away. On the occasion of big ceremonies it was usually a portion of the sacrificial meat; but even when we went on an ordinary friendly visit we were always given eggs, milk, or grain.

In the case of a boy each guest brings one rupee and a ceremonial scarf of butter muslin; but for a girl the usual present is six annas or a chicken. The scarf is not given for girls.

Only very rich people will go to the expense of sacrificing an animal for a baby girl, and when the Mun offers it to